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SUBJECT: NCP: NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE, SEEK FREE AND FAIR ELECTION-
C-AL9-02505

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert E. Whitehead, Charge D'Affaires; REASON:
1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On January 28, poloff met with Ibrahim Ghandour, political secretariat chief of the National Congress Party (NCP) and a senior NCP member. According to Ghandour, the NCP never asked the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to reconsider Yassir Arman's candidacy and talks between the parties are not breaking down. The presidency is awaiting First Vice President Salva Kiir's signature on the Ad-hoc Technical Border Committee report to begin negotiating the remaining disputed sections of the border. Ghandour has taken over the International Criminal Court file for the Presidency. The NCP has established political and technical committees for post-2011 discussions. Salah Ghosh, former director of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), appears to be taking on a greater role in formulating NCP policy vis-C -vis negotiations with the SPLM, though Ghosh himself has not been prominently featured in the talks themselves. END SUMMARY

NCP: NO FREEZE ON SPLM DISCUSSIONS

12. (C) On January 25, poloff received word from the office of GOSS Vice President Riek Machar that the NCP had asked the SPLM to revoke the its candidate for President, Yassir Arman, and further decided to end all talks to resolve the census conflict. The NCP's Ghandour, however denied that that there had been any discussion of Arman's candidacy and the NCP had not asked the SPLM to withdraw his nomination. According to Ghandour, despite Machar's departure and exaggerated media reports, the NCP feels that discussions on the census/elections issue are not off the table. He noted that the latest source of conflict stems from Second Vice President Taha's stance that any additional parliamentary seats allocated to the South (to resolve the census issue) should be done after the election in April 2010. A proposal was given to Vice President Machar suggesting that after elections, a number of seats would be appointed, taking into account the number of votes each party gets. Ghandour insisted that the NCP wants to see some smaller southern parties get part of the appointments as a result. (Note: This is a position the SPLM has told the Embassy they agree with. End Note) Ghandour blamed the SPLM for going to the press and blowing up the issue. The Embassy learned on January 31 that Second Vice President Taha is meeting with First Vice President Kiir to discuss these issues.

PRESIDENCY HAS NORTH-SOUTH BORDER DEMARCATION REPORT

13. (C) During the week of January 17, 2010, the Ad-hoc Technical Border Committee submitted its report to the Presidency with 80 percent of the border demarcated and 20 percent still disputed. According to Ghandour, the Presidency is awaiting First Vice President Salva Kiir's signature on the report as it stands so that the Presidency can negotiate the remaining 20 percent of the disputed areas. Ghandour stated that there is still no mechanism to resolve the contested border areas and he did not know of any timeframe within which this would be completed. The SPLM seems similarly unconcerned about completing demarcation of the north-south border, a process which is years behind schedule.

NCP ESTABLISHES POST-2011 NEGOTIATION COMMITTEES

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14. (C) According to Ghandour, Sayed el Khatib, NCP Director of the Strategic Studies Center and member of the Presidency, and Luka Biong, Government of Southern Sudan Minister of Presidential Affairs met and agreed that each party should prepare technical committees to deal with post referendum discussions. The NCP has created a post-referendum political committee (co-chaired by Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin, Advisor to the President, and Second Vice President Ali Osman Taha) along with technical subcommittees

to deal with specific issues. According to Ghandour, Vice President Taha, Ghandour, and former National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Director Salah Gosh will be closely involved in the process and will be the "core negotiating team". The GOSS established its own committees, but has yet to appoint members. Ghandour remarked that he thinks a "Naivasha II" type of negotiation may be the necessary structure to reach post-referendum agreements. He feels the NCP is ready to begin post-referendum discussions and negotiations.

GHANDOUR TAKES OVER THE ICC FILE

15. (C) Ghandour stated that he was recently given responsibility for the ICC file. Ghandour was non committal about whether or not the NCP would use the ICC indictment as a leading campaign mechanism for Bashir's election campaign, although he hinted that such a national issue would likely be taken up by supporters.

NCP WANTS A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION

16. (C) Ghandour stated that the NCP wants to see free and fair

elections. In response to complaints over the content of the National Security Act, he reports that the NCP tells other parties that "it is the practice that matters." He hopes that parties will obtain proper permits and take necessary steps like telling authorities specific procession routes for planned political rallies. Ghandour went on to emphasize that Sudanese media is the NCP's biggest enemy. "It portrays us in too good of a light" Ghandour stated. Ghandour indicated that the NCP was interested in getting a more critical press so that they would have the chance to prove how strong their support really is. "Sudanese agree with the way we do business" he said. Ghandour further noted that despite opposition parties complaining about a lack of money for campaigning, he thinks the government cannot do anything about this in the short-term. The NCP is allying with some parties and giving them support, he said.

SALAH GHOSH TAKES ON ADVISOR ROLE

17. (S) Ghandour continuously referred to Salah Ghosh's involvement in political discussions. It is clear that since Ghosh's removal from the NISS, he has been actively engaged in internal NCP politics in a predominately influential supporting role. In rare cases, Ghosh has been negotiating with the SPLM directly but direct negotiation is usually left up to other senior NCP officials. Ghosh is often the representative who is involved in negotiations with other senior NCP officials such as Vice President Taha, Ghandour and other members of the Presidency. Ghandour noted that Ghosh was

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specifically selected to go to Kassala to resolve a dispute over the nominee for governor due to his past connections to the East. According to accounts from officials on the ground, Ghosh offered a series of incentives to pay off officials who felt left out of the election candidate nomination process. According to Ghandour, Ghosh will be part of the central negotiation team for post-2011 issues. Ghandour and Ghosh will report directly to Vice President Taha.

BIO INFORMATION

8.(S) Ghandour is chief of the NCP political secretariat, chairman of the NCP caucus of the National Assembly, Chairman of the Sudanese Workers Trade Union Federation (SWTUF) and a member of the Pan-African Parliament. Ghandour is a hardliner, although considered to be very close to Vice President Taha, and is a central negotiator on critical issues due to his known talent of effective negotiation. Ghandour insists that he is purely a political man and is not interested in a formal role in the government. Ghandour will run for a National Assembly seat for a geographic constituency in Khartoum North that is a Popular Congress Party (PCP) stronghold. During meetings Ghandour is coy and suspicious of American intentions, but clever and cunning in his remarks. He tends to make jokes underhandedly criticizing U.S. policy toward Sudan. Ghandour is a dentist by training and only recently gave up his dental practice in Khartoum which his children took over. He has three wives, one of whom is very politically active.

¶9. (S) COMMENT: Ghandour's comments regarding relations with the SPLM likely reflect Taha's sentiments toward the situation, since Ghandour told poloff that he received a direct readout from Taha. The central role of Ghandour and Ghosh, both considered to be NCP hardliners, in negotiations could indicate that they are present to keep Vice President Taha in check (Note: Vice President Taha is known to be optimistic, more open to foreigners and willing to compromise more readily with the SPLM. End Note). Ghandour is often employs negotiation techniques that take advantage of the SPLM's lack of capacity. For example, Ghandour was one of the most important members pushing to make amendments to the Southern Sudan Referendum Law that was passed without SPLM consent in December ¶2009. From Ghandour's comments regarding consultations on various negotiations, we judge that Ghandour represents the more conservative/hardline faction of the NCP and may seek to advance their interests in negotiations with the SPLM. END COMMENT
WHITEHEAD